



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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**Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA)  
Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, San Jose, Costa Rica**

**DISASTER RESPONSE**

## Providing Humanitarian Aid to Flood-Ravaged Bolivia and Ecuador

USAID has provided life-saving humanitarian assistance to families affected by severe flooding in Bolivia and Ecuador in recent months. Heavier than normal rainfall due to the La Niña weather phenomenon caused the widespread flooding.

USAID/OFDA teams deployed to each country met with emergency management officials, conducted damage assessments and needs analysis, and coordinated the airlift of relief supplies from the United States.

To date, U.S. Government assistance to Bolivia and Ecuador in response to the recent floods exceeds \$1.3 million, of which USAID/OFDA has provided more than \$1 million.

In Bolivia, widespread flooding damaged or destroyed nearly 600 houses, displaced thousands of residents, and affected nearly 24,000 hectares of cropland since November 2007. By mid-February, torrential rains and flooding had affected nearly 57,000 families in seven of Bolivia's nine departments, and resulted in the deaths of 71 people with another 5 reported missing, according to Bolivia's Ministry of Civil Defense.

The Government of Bolivia declared a



Photo by Ricardo Herrera, USAID/OFDA

*Trucks deliver  
USAID/OFDA  
supplies to  
San Pedro, in  
the Bolivian  
department of  
Santa Cruz,  
on January 31.*

national state of emergency on January 21.

In response, USAID/OFDA provided \$100,000 to the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) for the purchase and distribution of emergency relief supplies and to the local Center for Health Investigation, Studies, and Services (CIES) for health services for affected families in the Amazonian department of Beni, one of the areas hardest hit by the flooding.

On January 31, U.S. Ambassador Philip

S. Goldberg presented USAID/OFDA-funded relief supplies, which had been pre-positioned in Bolivia prior to the rainy season, to officials in the department of Santa Cruz.

On February 10, USAID/OFDA airlifted an additional 310 rolls of plastic sheeting, 1,000 ten-liter water containers, and 1,536 hygiene kits from the USAID/OFDA warehouse in Miami, Florida, to Bolivia.

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**DISASTER RESPONSE**

## Helping Paraguay Fight Yellow Fever

USAID/OFDA has provided \$50,000 to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) in response to the yellow fever emergency in Paraguay.

Public concern over the outbreak, which has caused at least eight deaths, along with a shortage of vaccination doses, resulted in demonstrations, highway blockades, and long lines outside hospitals in order to receive the vaccine.

The Government of Paraguay declared a national emergency on February 15 and appealed for additional doses of the vaccine. On February 19, U.S. Ambassador James C. Cason announced the \$50,000 contribution from the U.S. Government.

PAHO is using the USAID/OFDA funds, as well as contributions from other donors, to assist Paraguay's Ministry of Health with yellow fever vaccination activities, including mobilizing doses from neighboring countries, providing lab equipment and testing kits, and assisting with epidemiological surveillance.

As of mid-March, more than 1.4 million Paraguayans had been vaccinated against the mosquito-borne disease, according to PAHO.

**DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

## Preparing for Caribbean Tsunamis

USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Julie Leonard participated in the third meeting of the U.N. Education, Science and Cultural Organization Intergovernmental Coordination Group on the Early Warning System for Tsunamis and other Coastal Threats to the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions, held in Panama from March 12 to 14.

Attendees discussed progress made on the system and reviewed the implementation plan to be carried out by regional organizations and the governments of the 26 member countries.

"Establishing a tsunami warning system is extremely complex," Leonard said. "The good news is that almost all the seismic networks are in place and sharing data. What still requires work is improving the communication systems needed to evacuate populations at risk."

USAID/OFDA has supported the system's development since 2005. It has provided nearly \$810,000 since 2006 to help upgrade the Eastern Caribbean seismic network, empower coastal communities to prepare for tsunamis, and train risk managers from the region in seismology and tsunami warnings.

## COMING UP

### Disaster Response Training in Haiti

From March 21 to April 10, disaster expert Liliana Etchebarne will provide technical assistance to the Government of Haiti's Directorate of Civil Protection on incorporating the subject of disaster risk management in institutes of higher education. She also will provide technical assistance for damage assessment and needs analysis courses. Etchebarne, a consultant with the International Resources Group (IRG), which implements USAID/OFDA's Training and Technical Assistance Program in the region, was part of the USAID/OFDA assessment team deployed to Haiti last year following Tropical Storm Noel. Etchebarne will employ her observations and knowledge from that experience to assist Haiti in better preparing to respond to future disasters.

### Volcano Monitoring Workshop

USAID/OFDA provided \$12,000 to support Costa Rica's Vulcanological and Seismological Observatory's 11th workshop on monitoring volcanic activity with high-resolution multispectral satellite images, to be held from March 28 to April 6 at the National University campus in Heredia. The workshop includes field visits to Arenal and Poas, two of the country's most active volcanoes.

### Hurricane Conference

Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan will represent USAID/OFDA at the U.S. National Hurricane Conference from March 31 to April 4 in Orlando, Florida. The goal of the conference is to improve hurricane preparedness, response, and recovery in order to save lives and property in the United States and Caribbean and Pacific islands. The conference also serves as a forum for federal, state, and local officials to exchange ideas and recommend policies to improve emergency management.



Photo by Ricardo Herrera, USAID/OFDA

*The U.S. Military supports USAID/OFDA during disaster relief activities in Latin America and the Caribbean.*

### Military Officer Training

USAID/OFDA will offer training in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to 45 senior military officers from the United States and 16 Caribbean nations during the Tradewinds military exercise in the Dominican Republic on April 2 and 3. USAID/OFDA will provide the training in collaboration with other humanitarian organizations. During the event, Regional Advisors Tim Callaghan and Sidney Velado will discuss USAID/OFDA, the disaster declaration mechanism, relief operations, and protecting vulnerable populations.

### Grant Guidelines Workshop

USAID/OFDA has invited current and potential partners to attend a workshop on the newly revised Guidelines for Unsolicited Proposals and Reporting, to be held on April 16 and 17 in San Jose, Costa Rica.

## Assistance to Bolivia and Ecuador

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Ambassador Goldberg presented the supplies, which would benefit an estimated 2,000 families, to officials in Trinidad, Beni, the next day.

"Our presence in Beni makes clear the U.S. Government's appreciation for and solidarity with the Bolivian people, especially at this difficult time in which the country is facing severe natural disasters," Ambassador Goldberg stated at the February 11 event. "For several weeks we have been bringing relief aid to the flooded areas in close coordination with the Bolivian Government, the regional governments, and the municipalities." Another U.S. Embassy aircraft transported more than four tons of metallic structures for tent construction.

Prior to the rainy season, USAID/OFDA had pre-positioned shelter supplies in Bolivia, allowing USAID/Bolivia, working through ADRA and CIES, to set up more than 300 tents and 2 health posts in Beni.

"At first, the strategy was to use public schools for shelters, but as the floods increased and more and more communities were affected, the school infrastructure was not sufficient," explained Sidney Velado, USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor for Latin America and the Caribbean, who led the team deployed to Bolivia.

Providing safe drinking water and preventing the spread of water- and mosquito-borne diseases were other top priorities. Toward that end, USAID/OFDA airlifted nearly 7,700 mosquito nets that were distributed to residents to help prevent dengue, yellow fever, and malaria.

USAID/OFDA also airlifted three medical kits to Bolivia to assist with community health-care services. Each kit contains medicines and medical supplies for up to 10,000 people for a three-month period.

In Ecuador, heavy rains since mid-January led to severe flooding in 13 provinces, mostly in the coastal regions.

Landslides and floods caused at least 19 deaths and an estimated \$200 million in damage to homes, crops, and infrastructure, prompting the Government of Ecuador to declare a national state of emergency on February 20.

On February 25 and March 3, USAID/OFDA airlifted relief commodities, including 8,160 hygiene kits, 3,000 ten-liter water containers, 200 rolls of reinforced plastic sheeting, and a 10,000-liter water bladder, from Miami to Guayaquil, Ecuador.

USAID/OFDA had previously provided \$50,000 to the Ecuadorian Red Cross for the local purchase of relief supplies to distribute to affected families.

USAID/OFDA also provided nearly \$170,000 to the American Red Cross for emergency relief activities in the hardest-hit provinces of El Oro, Guayas, and Los Rios, as well as \$50,000 to the Pan American Health Organization for water treatment and other health and sanitation work in affected areas.

Additionally, in response to a request from USAID/OFDA, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention donated much-needed cleanup supplies to Ecuador, including 30,720 wipes for decontaminating household or school items, 5,200 alcohol pads, 3,800 face masks, 36,000 cases of rubber gloves, 3,200 boot covers, and 5,600 biohazard trash bags.

Heavy rains and floods in some areas are expected to continue into April.

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